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GOLDEN PLAIN: THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF TSOPK/KHARPET

Robert H. Hewsen

There is probably no region of Armenia more familiar to Americans of Armenian ancestry than Kharpert and its Golden Plain. Armenians from Kharpert seem to have settled everywhere and until the recent renewal of Armenian immigration they could almost be thought of as the quintessential Armenian-American element in the United States. This is largely because Kharpert was the seat of one of the most important American missionary stations, and for this reason many Armenians were emboldened to try their luck in the distant land whose citizens had made such a strong impact on them at home. This part of Armenia—the extreme southwest of the Armenian Plateau—is especially interesting because there are few regions of ancient Armenia about which there is so much information.¹

The Land of Zupani/Tsupani and the Kingdom of Sophene

In the first half of the first millennium B.C., this area became the center of a kingdom known as Zupani (pronounced Tsupani).² Here among other ethnic entities dwelled the Khurrians or Hurrians,³ who

¹ The most detailed description of Armenian Kharpert, its province, and its way of life is to be found in the massive work of Vahe Haig, *Kharberd ev anor voskeghen dashie* [Kharpert and Its Golden Plain] (New York: Kharpert Compatriotic Union, 1959).

² Nikolai V. Arutiunian, *Toponimika Urartu* [Uartian Toponymy] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1985), p. 237.

³ For the Hurrians, see Ephraim A. Speiser, *Mesopotamian Origins: The Basic Population of the Near East* (Philadelphia and London: University of Pennsylvania Press and Oxford University Press, 1930); Igor M. Diakonoff, *Predistoriia armians-*

it seems gave their name to the district of Khordzean and to the locality of Horeberd—the later Kharberd or Kharpert, probably meaning “Khurrian Fortress.” Here, too, dwelled the Pala or Bala people,⁴ who gave their name to such local sites as Palu and Baghin, as well as to the districts of Balahovit, Palunik, and Paghnatun. Early on, this region was occupied by the Urartians, whose remnants, the Urtaians, still lived there in the sixth century A.D. Spreading out westward from their center at Van, the Urartians occupied the earlier fortresses at Palu and Baghin and seem to have made their chief regional center at Kharpert. From Zupani, the Urartians were in a position to attack the neo-Hittite kingdom of Melid (Malatia), a state that extended, at least for a time, along both sides of the Euphrates River, which otherwise would have been the natural western frontier of Zupani.⁵

After the fall of Urartu around 585 B.C., the Kharpert region became a part of the Median Empire and then, after 550, a part of the Persian Achaemenian Empire until it was conquered by Alexander the Great in 331-330 B.C.⁶ After Alexander's death, his short-lived empire was divided among his generals. Armenia fell to Seleucus, whose dynasty ruled first from Seleucia in Mesopotamia and soon afterward from Antioch, near the Mediterranean Sea in Syria. As the Seleucid dynasty weakened in the second century B.C., a number of Hellenistic kingdoms emerged from it, one of which was Greater Armenia and another Tsopk or Sophene, as the Greeks called the earlier Zupani. The dynasty of Tsopk/Sophene was a branch of the Ervanduni/Orontid royal house of Armenia and ruled the region until 95 B.C., when the kingdom was annexed by Tigran the Great of

kogo naroda (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1965); trans. Lori Jennings, *The Pre-History of the Armenian People* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Press, 1984). See also the speculative but provocative study by Martiros Kavukjian [Mardiros Kavoukjian], *Armenia, Subartu, ev Sumer* (Beirut: Armenian General Benevolent Union, 1988); trans. N. Ouzounian, *Armenia, Subartu, and Sumer: The Indo-European Homeland and Mesopotamia* (Montreal: M. Kavoukjian, 1987).

⁴ Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1963), p. 172.

⁵ Thomas A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*, 3 vols. (London: Pindar Press, 1987-1989), vol. 3, pp. 134-36.

⁶ Alexander never set foot in Armenia, but Mithranes, the Persian satrap (governor) of Sardis, acknowledged Alexander's rule in 344 B.C. and was appointed by him to administer Armenia. See Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 73, 280.

Greater Armenia.⁷ Thereafter, Tsopk/Sophene became at times a Roman province, at times an independent state under rulers appointed by Rome, and sometimes a part of Greater Armenia.⁸ Only when it was relinquished by the Persians to the Roman emperor Diocletian in 299 A.D. do its history and status begin to become clear.

Medieval Kharpert

Under Roman rule this part of Armenia originally consisted of three autonomous principalities: Greater Sophene, Lesser Sophene, and Ingilene-Anzitene, known in Armenian as Mets Tsopk, Pokr Tsopk, and Angeghtun-Handzit.⁹ Two more principalities were added in about 377 A.D.: Balabitene or Balahovit and Asthianene or Hashteank.¹⁰ Upon the suppression of this Pentarchy of five principalities by Emperor Justinian, they were combined into one province called Fourth Armenia (536-91), until Emperor Maurice reorganized Roman Armenia (591-640), and Fourth Armenia for some reason came to be called "The Other Fourth Armenia." The capital of Fourth Armenia appears to have been set at the village of Datem (Greek: Dadima), while that of the Other Fourth Armenia was to the north at Martyropolis (Armenian: Martirosats Kaghak).¹¹

In the mid-seventh century, the Arabs invaded Armenia, bringing the plain of Kharpert under their rule for 300 years. During that time the region was a frontier zone fought over between the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate until 938, when the Byzantines regained the region, making it into the theme—military province—of Mesopotamia, so named because the area lay between the upper and lower arms of the Euphrates River, now the Karachai and Murat

⁷ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 292, 294.

⁸ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, vol. 3, p. 138.

⁹ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 131.

¹⁰ N[ikoghayos] Adontz, *Armeniia v epokhu Iustiniana*; trans. and comm. Nina G. Garsoïan, *Armenia in the Age of Justinian* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970), pp. 36-37; Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 131. For further reading on the Pentarchy, see Adontz, *Armenia*, Chapter 2.

¹¹ For Fourth Armenia, see Robert H. Hewsen, *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarhac'oyc'): The Long and Short Recensions* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1992), pp. 153-57.

Su.¹² In the eleventh century, Kharpert was overrun by the Seljuk Turks, who drove out the Byzantines. It then passed to various local rulers, including the Armenian Philaretos who held the region of Malatia for a time. With a few interruptions the Muslim Artukid emirs of Mardin controlled Kharpert until 1234. Soon thereafter, the Mongols swept over the Middle East, and the area became a part of the successor state known as the empire of the Ilkhans or the Ilkhanate.¹³

Under the Ilkhans, Kharpert came to be disputed between the nomadic Turkmen Kara Koyunlu (Black Sheep) and Ak Koyunlu (White Sheep) tribal confederations, their rule, respectively 1378-1469 and 1378-1502, interrupted briefly by the ravages of Timur (Tamerlane) at the end of the fifteenth century.¹⁴ Timur's invasions, usually highly destructive, were less so in this area because the local Muslim rulers of Chemeshgadzak (Chimeshgezek), Kharpert, Kghi, and Palu had already submitted to his dominion.¹⁵ The Kara Koyunlu Turkmen had their heyday under Jahan Shah (1437-67), after whose defeat by the Ak Koyunlu Uzun Hasan the region became a part of his realm. Uzun Hasan (1453-78) ruled from Tabriz in Iran, but after his death, his Christian widow, Despina Khatun, daughter of the Greek emperor of Trebizond, and two of her daughters took up residence in Kharpert where they passed the rest of their lives in the castle-fortress atop its peak.¹⁶

The history of the Malatia region to the west of the Euphrates was somewhat different from that of Kharpert. The city passed to the Seljuk Turks in 1178 and to the Egyptian Mamluks in 1315. Ilkhan rule withered in the region rapidly after 1335 when it came under the control of the emirs of Dulgadir, who advanced to occupy both Malatia and Kharpert by the 1360s and who held them until their recapture by the Mamluks in around 1416. In this confusion, a number of Kurdish emirates arose in the area, notably at Pertag and Saghman. After 1429, the Ak Koyunlu Turkmen gained control of Malatia. As Ak Koyunlu power disintegrated with the invasions of

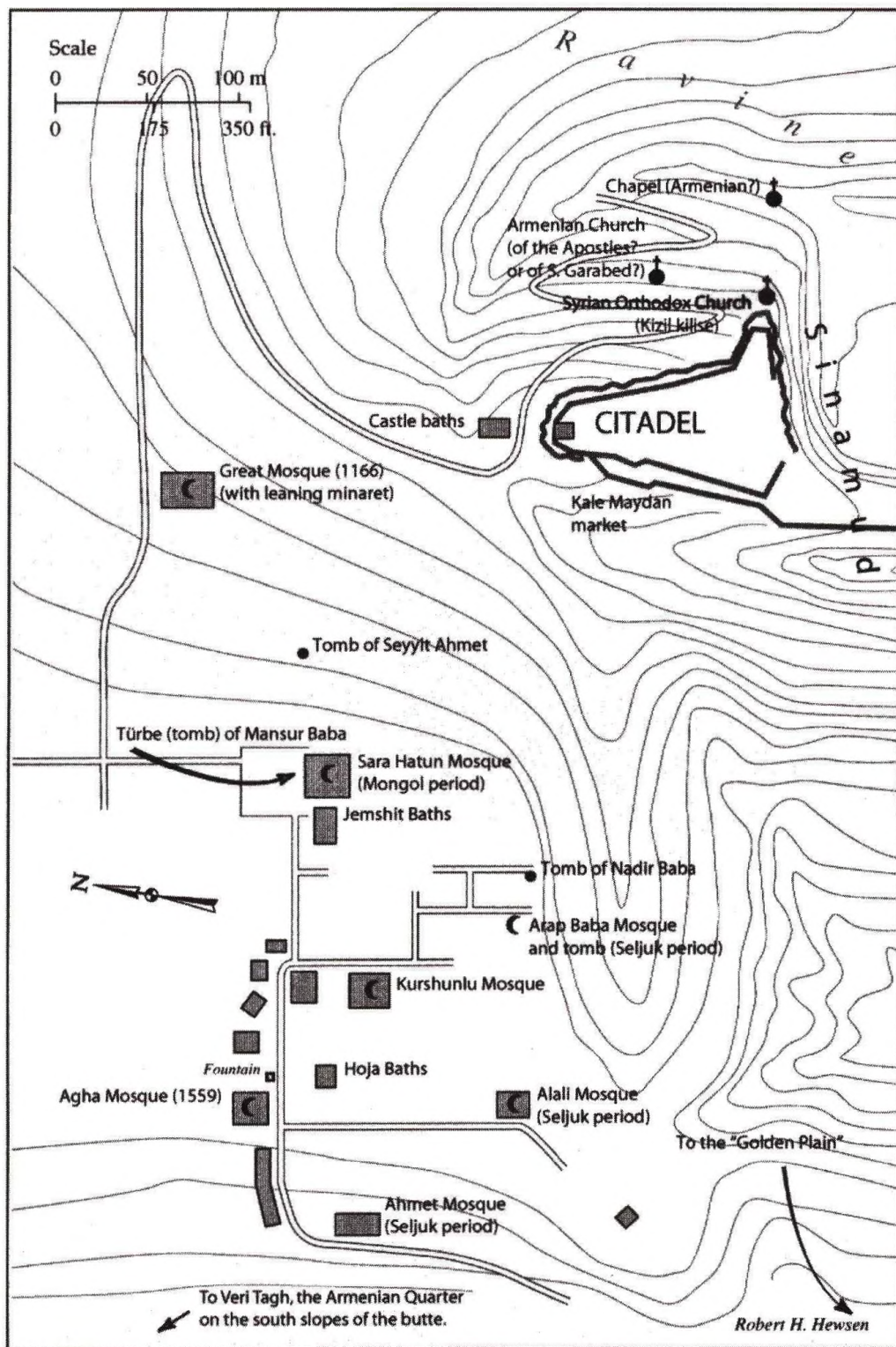
¹² Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, vol. 3, p. 147.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 150, 152-56.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 156-57.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁶ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, vol. 1, pp. 112-13, and vol. 3, pp. 20, 157, 404-05.



The Town of Kharpert (Harput, *after* T.A. Sinclair)

Timur, the region was fought over by the Ottoman Turks from the west and the new Safavid dynasty of Iran from the east, but shortly after the battle of Chaldiran (1514), the Ottomans were in permanent control.¹⁷

The Ottoman Period

The regions of Kharpert and Diarbekir came under Ottoman control between 1515 and 1517 and for long were placed within the *pashalik* (governor-generalship) of Erzerum.¹⁸ At the time of the promulgation of the Ottoman Law of Vilayets in 1864, however, Kharpert appears as a *mutasarriflik*, that is, a *sanjak* (county) of the *vilayet* (province) of Diarbekir. In 1875 this mutasarriflik was made an independent sanjak, but in 1879-80 it was expanded by incorporating the sanjaks of Malatia and Arghana from the vilayet of Diarbekir and organized as the separate vilayet of Mamuret ul-Aziz.¹⁹ The southern peripheral area of Siirt or Sghert was taken away and attached to the vilayet of Bitlis in 1883, but in 1888 the sanjak of Dersim in the north, previously a separate vilayet of its own, was attached to Mamuret ul-Aziz. The total area of Mamuret ul-Aziz after these readjustments of territory was about 123,595 square kilometers/37,800 square miles, divided into three sanjaks (Kharput-Mezre, Malatia, and Dersim) and eighteen kazas or districts (in Kharput-Mezre sanjak: Kharput-Mezre, Arabkir, Eghin (Agn), and Keban Maden; in Malatia sanjak: Malatia, Behesni, Adiaman or Husni Mansur, Kiahda, and Akchedagh; in Dersim sanjak: Khozat (Hozat), Chemeshgadzak, Charsanjak (Perri), Mazgerd (Medzgerd/Metskert), Khuzuchan, Ovajik (Ovajiugh), Pertek (Pertag/Berdak), Pakh (Pah), and Kizil-Kilise, with a combined total of 2,443 villages.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 154-59.

¹⁸ Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1908* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 18, 39-40, 70-71.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 70-71. Robert H. Hewsen, *A Historical Atlas of Armenia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 188.

²⁰ Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 2 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1891), p. 319.

Population

Population figures for the province and their demographic and ethnic breakdown vary significantly. A few are shown below:

Vital Cuinet (circa 1890)²¹

Muslim	267,416
Kurd	54,950
Kizilbash [Shiite Muslim]	182,580
Armenian Apostolic	61,983
Armenian Catholic	1,675
Armenian Protestant	6,060
Greek	650
TOTAL	575,314

Malachia Ormanian²²

(Armenians in the six dioceses of the vilayet, 1910)

Armenian Apostolic	131,000
Armenian Catholic	5,000
Armenian Protestant	7,600
TOTAL	143,600

Ottoman Census (1911-12)²³

Muslim	446,379
Gypsy	71
Armenian	87,864
Syrian [Assyrian Christian]	2,823
Greek	971
Chaldean [Catholic Assyrian]	8
TOTAL	538,116

²¹ Ibid., p. 322.

²² Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, 2d ed. rev. (London: Mowbray, 1910; New York: St. Vartan Press, 1955), Appendix II.

²³ Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), pp. 51, 68, 97, and Table 5.1, pp. 102-03.

Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople (1912)²⁴

Armenian	168,000
Jacobite, Nestorian, Chaldean	5,000
Turk	102,000
Kizilbash	80,000
Nomadic Kurd	20,000
Sedentary Kurd	75,000
TOTAL	450,000

Justin McCarthy²⁵

Muslim	564,164
Syrian, Nestorian, Chaldean	2,833
Armenian	111,043
Greek	1,227
Other	974
TOTAL	680,241

Economy

This part of Armenia was particularly fertile and with its numerous trees was much more verdant than most of the high plateau. The air was generally healthy although there were outbreaks of malaria and other fevers around Keban Maden and Malatia during the summer months. There was much snow in the winter but little after February, and in comparison with other parts of the Armenian Plateau the climate must be considered as mild. Agriculture was the chief economic activity of the province; cereals were grown and all sorts of fruits and vegetables. Some tobacco was also cultivated, but it was of a mediocre quality and very strong. Stock-breeding was important (horses, donkeys, mules, cattle, goats, and especially sheep); and wool, silk, and hides were produced. The silk industry had thrived in Malatia, but it was gradually declining. There was only one important mining operation in the province, a silver mine at Keban Maden (whence its alternative name Gumush Maden or "Silver Mine"), but it was closed in about 1875, after which the population of the town plummeted from some 3,000 to about 300 people. There were other silver mines at Chemeshgadzak and one of coal at Palu. Most of the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁵ Ibid., Table 6.1, p. 110.

local trees had been cut down to produce charcoal for these mining operations, resulting in deforestation of large areas of the province. There was one saline spring at Bulanik near Malatia, whose salts were dried and sold, but there were no mineral springs and only a few hot springs at Pertag and several other places.²⁶

Ecclesiastical Organization

The vilayet was divided into six sees of the Armenian Apostolic Church. An archbishop for the sanjak of Mamuret ul-Aziz or Harput resided in the town of Kharpert (having jurisdiction in 1910 over 72 parishes, 75 churches, and about 45,000 faithful, according to Ormanian), with bishops at Arabkir (16 parishes, 20 churches, 18,000 members) and at Agn (7 parishes, 10 churches, 10,000 members). In the sanjak of Dersim, there were bishops at Chemesghadzak (31 parishes, 22 churches, about 9,000 members), and Charsanjak (69 parishes, 50 churches, and 18,000 members). A single bishop presided over the entire sanjak of Malatia (42 parishes, 23 churches, 20,000 members). Malatia alone came under the jurisdiction of the Catholicosate of Cilicia at Sis, the other prelates being under the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople.²⁷ The Armenian Catholics were served by a bishop since 1850, presiding over the entire vilayet and coming under the jurisdiction of the apostolic vicar representing the pope at Constantinople. Another bishop at Malatia, first appointed in 1861, came under the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate at Bzommar in Lebanon. Armenian Catholics were scattered throughout the vilayet, especially at Kharpert and Mezre (Mezireh), and in the villages of Tadem (Datem), Bazmashen, Garmri, Khuylu (Tlgadin), Keserig, Susurig (Sosrig), and Hiusenig. There was a large and particularly well-organized Armenian Catholic parish at Arabkir.²⁸

The Town of Kharpert

Kharpert (Eastern Armenian: Kharberd; Turkish: Harput) sat on top

²⁶ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 2, chapter on Mamuret ul-Aziz, pp. 317-404.

²⁷ Ormanian, *Church of Armenia*, Appendix II, p. 240.

²⁸ Jean Naslian, *Les mémoires de Mgr. Jean Naslian, Évêque de Trébizonde*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Mekhitarist Press, 1951), vol. 1, p. 289.

of a low mountain 350 meters/1,150 feet above the rich and densely populated plain at an altitude of 1,450 meters/4,757 feet above sea level, crowned by the ruined fortress that had given the town its name (Horeberd).²⁹ Under Ottoman rule, Kharpert was long a mercantile and industrial town flourishing at the juncture of trade routes running north-south from Erzerum to Diarbekir and east-west from Iran to Anatolia. By the nineteenth century, however, as a result of insufficient water, the inconvenience of having its narrow streets clogged with snow each winter, and the difficulties of communicating with its villages in the plain, the population of Kharpert had been steadily drifting down to the town of Mezre, founded at the foot of the mountain in 1834. Kharpert itself, with about 20,000 inhabitants in 1910, was gradually being deserted. The provincial governor or *vali* resided in Mezre, and in the time of Sultan Abdul-Aziz (1861-76), its name was changed to Mamuret ul-Aziz (that is, town made prosperous by Aziz). Although the new name proved too cumbersome for daily use and the town continued to be called Mezre, when the vilayet was established in 1880, Mamuret ul-Aziz was the name by which the new jurisdiction was officially called.³⁰

Both Kharpert and Mezre were the centers of a local textile industry producing silk fabrics (embroideries, striped silks, and *moiré*), and there was considerable weaving done in villages such as Hiusenig and Keserig. The villages of the Golden Plain also produced *kilims* (decorative mats), covers for packing goods, curtains, and furniture coverings. Poor roads, the long distances from seaports, and lack of security in the countryside, however, limited the local trade and commerce and kept the area poor.³¹

The town of Kharpert had the distinction of being the location of the central headquarters of all the mission stations and other activities of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions operating in Turkey.³² In Kharpert, the mission station, established in 1855, consisted of a theological seminary founded in 1859, an institution of higher learning (called Armenia College when it was incorporated in 1876 but renamed Euphrates College in 1888, after

²⁹ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, p. 355.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 352-57.

³¹ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, vol. 3, p. 159.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

the Ottoman authorities protested the original name), and an orphanage established in 1895. The mission's work bore fruit quickly, and an important local Armenian Protestant congregation was formed by 1856. Schools, hospitals, and orphanages in Kharpert-Mezre were also operated by German Protestant missionaries, Spanish, Italian, and then French Brothers of the Capuchin Order, and Armenian (Catholic) Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (*Anarat Hghutiun*).³³

Arabkir and Agn

Located to the northwest of Kharpert, Arabkir had a population of about 20,000 people, of whom almost half were Armenian.³⁴ The kaza, in which the Armenians formed about a seventh of the population, contained 68 small villages of which the largest, Tepe, had 700 inhabitants, and only four others had more than 400 people.³⁵ The principal industry of the town was the manufacture of cotton cloth, with fifteen workshops devoted to its production. Nine industrial establishments made cotton thread, while eighteen others manufactured a specially prepared local cotton cloth.³⁶ Arabkir was one of those towns in Anatolia where an especially high proportion of men left to seek work elsewhere, entrusting their wives and children to their parents. The American Board had founded a minor mission station at Arabkir in 1853, and its local Armenian congregation dated from the following year. As noted, the town was a center of Armenian Catholicism.

Agn or Eghin (spring) took its name from a large source of water at the foot of a small mountain on the slopes of which the town was built.³⁷ From the spring issued a steady stream, which filled the town with brooks and canals. So richly endowed with water for irrigation, Agn abounded in greenery and had an unusually lush appearance for an eastern town. Built in the shape of an amphitheater, it was surrounded by mills and vineyards. With a population of some 19,000

³³ Julius Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), p. 116; Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 328-29.

³⁴ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, p. 359.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

people, Agn, which contrary to common belief did not become a significant locality until about 1830, had an unusually high proportion of merchants, small manufacturers, and bankers. In the early 1890s, the town boasted some twenty banks (at a time when Van had none), thirteen business establishments, and three money-changers. The chief industries were tanning and the production of cotton and silk. Some forty-two manufacturing establishments existed in Agn, including eighteen textile mills, seven tanneries, nine furriers, and eight dye shops. The community was prosperous enough to support five mosques, two Armenian churches, eleven medreses, six Muslim elementary schools, and seven Armenian elementary and middle schools. It had three pharmacies, two doctors, two dentists, and two music teachers. Of the Armenian villages around Agn, four adhered to the Greek Orthodox (Chalcedonian) rite: Shirzu, Vank, Soragh (Dzorag), and Mushagh (Musheghgan).³⁸ The prominent Dadian family, which claimed royal Artsruni descent after it gained fame and fortune in Constantinople, originated in Agn.³⁹

Malatia

An important commercial center lying in a very fertile area at the juncture of the roads leading from Sivas to Kharpert and Urfa, Malatia/Malatya (historic Melid, Melitine, Meltini) was surrounded by magnificent gardens served by canals drawing their water from the many springs in the town. These canals flowed into the stream called Sultan Su, which then flowed into the Tohma about 4 kilometers/2.5 miles away, some 20 kilometers/12.5 miles from where the latter entered the Euphrates.⁴⁰ The town was renowned for its vineyards and orchards, especially apricots, peaches, and robust grapes, which produced an excellent wine. So highly developed had the garden area become that the walled town, Eski (old) Malatia, was

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 363-66.

³⁹ For the Dadians, see Pars Tuğlaci, *The Role of the Dadian Family in Ottoman Social, Economic and Political Life* (Istanbul: Pars Yayın, 1993); Robert H. Hewsen, "In Search of Armenian Nobility: Five Armenian Families of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 3 (1987): 94-99.

⁴⁰ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 372-74. For the Armenians of Malatia, the best source is Arshak Alpoyachian's massive *Patmutiun Malatio Hayots* [History of the Armenians of Malatia] (Beirut: Sevan, 1961).

gradually being deserted and tended to be inhabited only during the winter months. The government building was in the garden district as were all of the functioning mosques.⁴¹ Armenians were found largely in the town itself where Franciscan Capuchins and Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception maintained missions and where there had been an important Armenian Protestant congregation since 1864. On the other hand, there were very few Armenians in the local villages, and Malatia may be taken as marking the end of significant Armenian settlements until one came to Cilicia at the southwestern frontier of historic Armenia.⁴²

The Rural Areas and Dersim

Kharpert was famed for its Vosgetashd (Oskedasht) or Golden Plain, a vast, fertile expanse, thickly sown with thriving villages, most of them inhabited by Armenians. The largest of these was Hiusenig, "the little carpenter," the subject of two monographs.⁴³ Other villages such as Parchanch (Parchanj, Perchench) have also been memorialized in books.⁴⁴

The only important body of water in this province was Goljuk (Little Lake), the Turkish name being a direct translation of Tsovk in Armenian. Located some 25 kilometers/15 miles southeast of Kharpert, it covers an area of about 50 square kilometers/19 square miles and its depth ranges from 70 to 90 meters/230 to 295 feet deep. A fresh water lake, unlike most on the Armenian Plateau, its waters abound with fish, especially an excellent species of eel, and are the resort of otters that feed on them.⁴⁵ On an island in the lake stood the ruins of an Armenian monastery, Surb Nshan Tsovamoyrn. The local mountains and what was left of the forests once teemed with bears, wolves, foxes, deer, and martins.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 373-75.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 374-75.

⁴³ G.H. Aharonian, *Hiusenik* (Boston: Hairenik, 1965); and Marderos Deranian, *Hussenig*, trans. and rev. H.M. Deranian (Belmont, MA: Armenian Heritage Press, 1994).

⁴⁴ Mesrob B. Dzeron, ed., *Village of Parchanj: General History* (Boston: Baikar Press, 1938); trans. Arra Avakian (Fresno: Panorama West Books, 1984).

⁴⁵ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 339-40.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

Originally established as a separate vilayet in 1875 with its capital at Mazgerd, Dersim was joined to Mamuret ul-Aziz in 1888.⁴⁷ This rugged, mountainous area of nine kazas containing more than 500 small villages was one of the most remote and wildest parts of the Ottoman Empire and corresponds more or less to the old Armenian district of Mendzur or Munzur. Here, in scattered hamlets of ten to twenty houses, lived a particularly primitive group of Kurds, about 12,000 in number, whose religion was said to be closer to Christianity than to Islam. Existing in semi-isolation, they were warlike, given to brigandage, and virtually ignorant of arts or crafts. It was even said that their women, whom they treated as equals, did not know how to sew, even though they wove fine rugs and coverings. The men were able to make gunpowder, but their arms were purchased from Armenian manufacturers in the town of Perri.⁴⁸

In the entire sanjak of Dersim there reportedly were only twenty-five schools, of which eight were Armenian. The chief town was Khozat or Hozat, which grew rapidly after it became the district capital (from some 50 houses in 1875 to about 1,000 in 1890).⁴⁹ According to Cuinet, the Armenians, totaling 8,170, formed 12 percent of the sanjak's population of 63,430, which also was home to 27,800 Kizilbash (Shiite Muslims).⁵⁰ Of the other towns in the sanjak, Chemeshgadzak, Charsanjak, Mazgerd, and Pertag, only Chemeshgadzak had a population reaching 4,000.⁵¹

The Genocide

This prosperous part of Western Armenia suffered greatly in the massacres of 1895. In early November, Arabkir was looted for ten days and then burned, some 2,800 Armenians being said to have been slaughtered by both Turks and Kurds, not counting those slain in the surrounding villages. At Malatia, the Armenian quarters were sacked and burned from November 4 through 9, with about 3,000 people losing their lives. On November 10-11 came the turn of Kharpert,

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 384; Krikorian, *Armenians*, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁸ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 385-87.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 387-88.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 385.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 393-98.

where some 500 died.⁵² The presence of many foreigners in the town perhaps contributed to the lower death toll, although four of the town's seven Armenian churches were destroyed.

Many Armenians left the Kharpert area in the twenty years following the pogroms, but a significant percentage of the Armenian population still lived in the province in 1915 when the deportations and massacres began. The atrocities started in Kharpert, where after a brutal search for hidden arms, some 13,000 Armenian soldiers serving in the Turkish army and stationed at Kharpert were slaughtered.⁵³ Armenian professors and students at Euphrates College were murdered. The deportees, mostly women and children, were set upon by tribesmen, the attractive ones carried off and the rest slain. Of two large convoys sent south from Kharpert totaling some 18,000 people, mostly women and children, only about 300 reached Viranshehir. Sent onwards to Ras ul-Ain, barely 150 survived to reach Aleppo.⁵⁴ Armenian Kharpert was at an end.

Kharpert Today

Harput is now abandoned. Everyone now lives in the plain at the foot of the hill and except for a few houses, the old city is deserted. Nothing remains of the American missionary institutions, and the erstwhile Armenian quarters are a rubble-strewn slope on which can still be made out the ruins of the Church of Surb Hakob. Inhabitants of bustling Elazığ (formerly Mezre) now ascend the mountain by car to picnic, to honor a Muslim saint whose tomb is a place of pilgrimage, and to visit the various Ottoman monuments—mosques, baths, tombs—that still remain. The historic fortress is a great attraction, but the Assyrian church, still open in 1960 and accessible to visitors in 1998, was shuttered by the following year. On the slope, however, next to the ruins of the Armenian quarter, there is a row of modern homes built to take advantage of the view. This would appear to be

⁵² Christopher Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 161.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-21. For the massacres and deportations in the vilayet of Mamuret ul-Aziz, see also Great Britain, Parliament, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, Arnold Toynbee, ed. (London: Sir Joseph Causton and Sons, 1916), Chapter 11; Naslian, *Mémoires*, vol. 1, pp. 256-99.

the future of Harput: a salubrious resort for the inhabitants of the dull and nondescript town of Elazığ that has otherwise replaced it.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Robert H. Hewsen, personal observation, June, 1999.

❁ 5 ❁

THE FIVE “PEOPLES” OF TSOPK/SOPHENE

Robert H. Hewsen

The *vilayet* of Harput (Kharpert), later renamed Mamuret ul-Aziz after the Ottoman Sultan Abdul-Aziz (1861-76), occupied by and large the territory of the ancient Armenian kingdom of Tsopk or, as the Greeks called it, Sophene. This kingdom consisted of the lower or western basin of the Aratsani River, known to the Greeks as the Arsaniās and to the Turks today as the Murat Su. In this region, there were in ancient and early medieval times, twelve districts comprising five Armenian principalities, which in the mid-sixth century A.D. were combined to form a Byzantine province. The seventh-century Armenian Geography (*Ashkharhatsoyts*) attributed to Ananias of Shirak (Anania Shirakatsi) gives the only description of this part of Armenia as a Byzantine administrative unit, and it is important because it lists, besides the five principalities, the twelve districts of which they were composed.¹

The second land of Armenia, Fourth Armenia, that is the Region of Tsopk [*Chorrord Hayk or e Tsopats Koghm*], borders Upper Armenia [on the north]. It is bounded on the west by the city of Melitene, on the south by Mesopotamia, and on the east by Tarawn [Taron]. It has eight districts: Khordzayn, to the northeast through which flows the other River Gayl by the castle of Kogh; Hashtean, where rise the sources of the Tigris; west of Khordzayn is the district of Paghnatun with the castle of the same name [Paghin]. Opposite to the south is the district of Balahovit; to the west of it, Tsopk and the district of Handzit to the south in which are Tsovk and Hore castles; to the west of them, the district of Degik in which are located the

¹ *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarac'oyc')*: *The Long and Short Recensions*, intro., trans., and comm., Robert H. Hewsen (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1992), p. 59 and map XII, cited hereafter as Ananias, *Geography*.

castles of Krni, Kruik and Sok; opposite to the south, is the district of Gawrek. Through this [land] flows the Aratsani, which joins the Euphrates at the city of Lusatarich. Circling towards the west, it reaches the frontier of Lesser Armenia, east of Melitene, after which it receives the River Kavkas coming from the west from the mountain of Zigon Basilikon. Before its confluence with the Euphrates, it receives the River Karaminon coming from the Taurus Mountains and, having been received by the Euphrates, it flows south and cleaves the Taurus where rock crystal is found. Fourth Armenia has [many kinds of] animals, fowl, and among its wild beasts, the lion.

Although little is known about the kingdom of Tsopk/Sophene, we do know something about the history of the five principalities that seem to have been its divisions: Greater Tsopk, Lesser Tsopk, Angeghtun-Handzit, Balahovit, and Hashteank. The first three were acquired by the Romans in 299 and the last two about 377-78.² These principalities or “peoples” as they were called in the Roman Empire—*ethne* in Greek,³ *gentes* in Latin⁴—survived under Roman/Byzantine rule for 250 years before they were finally suppressed and their territories combined to form an imperial province called Fourth Armenia. The continued existence of these Armenian principalities for so long within the frontiers of the empire attests to the vigor of the princes who ruled them and to the importance attached to them by the Roman/Byzantine emperors in spite of their minuscule size. The suppression of these principalities in the mid-sixth century meant that no Armenians would ever again rule this quintessential part of the Armenian heartland.

The five principalities of Tsopk were as follows:

- 1) In the far north lay Tsopk Shahuni or Pokr Tsopk, that is Royal

² Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1963), p. 166n63, quoting Peter the Patrician, *Fragmenta*, in Theodorus Müller, ed., *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*, vol. 4 (Paris: A. Firmin Didot: 1851), frag. 14, p.189.

³ The term *ethne* is used in Justinian, *Novella XXXI*, in *Corpus Juris Civilis: Novellae*, Rudolf Schöll and Willhelm Kroll, eds., 6th ed. (Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1912); repr. in N[ikoghayos] Adontz, *Armenia v epokhu Iustiniana*, trans. and comm. Nina G. Garsoïan, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1970), p. 25. Further citations are to the English translation.

⁴ The term *gentes* is used in *Justinian's Code*, Book I.xxviii, repr. in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 2.

or Lesser Tsopk—including within it the two districts of Lesser Tsopk proper⁵ and Degik (Degisene),⁶ which together formed a single principality.⁷ The term "royal" used to describe it strongly suggests that the two districts formed a part of the royal domains of the Sophenean kings. Its center appears to have been the town of Chemesghadzak, which the Greeks called Hierapolis (Holy City) and the Byzantines, Kosomakhon, now Çimişgezek. Here in Degik in the seventh century, there were also located the three Armenian fortresses of Kruik, Krni, and Sok.⁸

2) In the far south was located Mets Tsopk, that is, Greater Tsopk,⁹ known to the Greeks as Sophanene.¹⁰ Its center seems to have been the town of Npret or Nprkert, later known as Martirosats Kaghak (City of Martyrs).¹¹ Amida (now Diarbekir or Diyarbakir), Arghn (Ergani or Erghani), and Abarne all lay in this principality as did the later town of Chunkush.

3) In between these first two principalities was found Angeghtun¹²

⁵ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n35. The Greek form *Sophene* is found in Ptolemy's *Geography*, Nobbe ed. (Leipzig, 1843-1845; repr. Hildesheim, 1966), V.13.13; the form *Tzophene* in Justinian's *Novella XXXI*, in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 35.

⁶ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n39.

⁷ Degik was not a principality in the Arshakuni (Arsacid) period and, cut off as it was from the rest of Armenia by Lesser Sophene, must have been a part of the latter principality. Very late in the Byzantine period reference is made to princes of Digisene, but these are either from a new house or a house from the lesser nobility (*azatk*), which had risen in status because of the breakdown of the earlier Armenian social order.

⁸ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n40.

⁹ Mets Tsopk is not found in the *Ashkharhatsoyts*. The Greek form *Sophene* is found in Procopius, *de aedificiis* [The Buildings] (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), III.ii.1; the variant *Tzophanene* is in Justinian's *Novella XXXI*. Among Armenian authors only the unknown author of the *Buzandaran Patmutiunk* uses the Armenian form (at III.ix, xii, xiv, IV.iv, xxiv, xxx; V.xvii, xxvii-xxviii). See *The Epic Histories (Buzandaran Patmut 'iwnk') Attributed to P'awstos Buzand*, trans. and comm. Nina G. Garsoïan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989; Armenian ed., St. Petersburg, 1883; repr. Delmar, NY: Caravan Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Suren T. Eremyan, *Hayastane est "Ashkharhatsoyts"-i* [Armenia According to the "Ashkharhatsoyts"] (Erevan, Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1963), p. 118.

¹¹ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 154; Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 9-10.

¹² The district of Angeghtun does not appear in the *Ashkharhatsoyts*. For details on its locations, see Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 33-35; Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 175-76.

(Greek: Ingilene)¹³ and Handzit¹⁴ (Greek: Anzitene),¹⁵ a single principality¹⁶ comprising the three districts of Angeghtun, Handzit, and Gaurek (Gaurene).¹⁷ Its center was the fortress of Anggh (Angegh), later known as the town of Agn or Eghin.¹⁸ The center of Handzit probably was at Horeberd,¹⁹ the possible site of Roman Anzita;²⁰ the center of Gaurek lay probably at Lusatarich, the modern Keban Maden.²¹ The heart of Handzit and the whole of Sophene was the plain of Kharpert, known to Western Armenians in modern times as the Voskedasht or Golden Plain (Turkish: Altinova). In antiquity the beauty of this plain was already known to the Greeks who called it Anthisene—"the flowery district" or "Florida."²²

4) To the east of Tsopk Shahuni lay the principality of Balahovit,²³ comprising the three districts of Balahovit,²⁴ Paghnatun,²⁵ and Khordzean,²⁶ (Greek: Balabitene,²⁷ Palines,²⁸ and Khortsianene or

¹³ Peter the Patrician, in Müller, *Fragmenta*, pp. 181-91, where the name is spelled as Intelene, probably a copyist's error.

¹⁴ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n36.

¹⁵ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.18.

¹⁶ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 131, 171-72.

¹⁷ Gaurek was not a principality in the Arshakuni/Arsacid period and, cut off as it was from the rest of Armenia by Handzit/Anzitene, must have been a part of the latter district.

¹⁸ Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 25, 241, 271, 456n21, 491n48, 520n72; Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian Studies*, pp. 167-68, 299-301; Thomas A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*, vol. 3 (London: Pindar Press, 1987), pp. 196-200.

¹⁹ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n38.

²⁰ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.19.

²¹ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 156n43.

²² Polybius' reference (vii.23.1) to the *Kalepedion* "beautiful plain" is probably to the plain of Kharpert as well. Eremyan, *Hayastane*, p. 43, cites the Anthias of Michael Attaliotes' *Historia* and the form Anthisene but identifies these Greek toponyms with Balahovit and suggests that the Akisene of Strabo (11.14.5) is a corrupted form that should be identified with it as well. J.D. Howard-Johnston, after a close examination of Attaliotes, has come to the conclusion that Anthias is to be identified with the plain of Ovajik in the upper valley of the Muzur River.

²³ For Balahovit as a principality, see Adontz, *Armenia*, pp. 27, 36-37; Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 172; Ananias, *Geography*, pp. 155-56n34.

²⁴ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 153-54.

²⁵ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 155n32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155n28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155n34.

²⁸ Georgius of Cyprus, *Descriptio orbis Romani*, ed. Heinrich Gelzer (Leipzig:

Khorzanue²⁹). Its center was the ancient Urartian fortress of Palu (Greek: Paluous) located in Balahovit proper.³⁰ The center of Pagh-natun was the fortress of Paghin (Greek: Palios),³¹ that of Khordzean, the fortress of Koghoberd, the later town of Kghi.³²

5) Finally, to the southeast of Balahovit lay the principality of Hashtean, ³³ which the Greeks called Astaunitis³⁴ and the Byzantines, Asthianene.³⁵ Its original center was probably the fortress of Ulor (Greek: Haluris), guarding the main pass through this stretch of the Taurus Mountains. Later it was centered at the fortress of Ktrich, which the Greeks called Kitamon³⁶ and the Byzantines, Kitharizon.³⁷ This principality was royal land belonging to the kings of Armenia and was set aside for the support of the king's younger sons, who were required to live there.³⁸ It had possibly been a part of the royal domains of the kings of Sophene, as well.

The origin of these five principalities, how far back they go in history or whether or not they were in existence as a part of the kingdom of Sophene, is uncertain. The princes of Lesser Sophene (Pokr Tsopk) may have been descended from the original rulers of the kingdom of Tsopk/Sophene and may even have gone back to pre-Armenian times.³⁹ The princes of Angeghtun-Handzit and Greater Sophene or Sophanene (Mets Tsopk) appear to have been branches of the Orontid/Ervandian dynasty,⁴⁰ which had secured control of

B.G. Teubner, 1890), line 962a.

²⁹ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, II.iii.9.

³⁰ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, pp. 117-25.

³¹ Ibid., p. 127.

³² Ibid., pp. 130, 140 for Koghoberd (where the Armenian form is incorrectly given as the Roman Kogoberd).

³³ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 155n31; Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 16.

³⁴ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.13.

³⁵ The form Asthianene is found as Asthianine in Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.iii.7, and as Astianikes in Georgius of Cyprus, *Descriptio orbis Romani*, line 964.

³⁶ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.16.

³⁷ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.iii.7.

³⁸ Movses Khorenatsi, *Patmutiun Hayots* [History of the Armenians], ed. Manuk Abeghian and Set Harutiunian (Tiflis: Martirosiants, 1913); Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and comm. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), II.8, 22, 62, pp. 144, 159, 205.

³⁹ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 162.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

Sophene in the third century B.C.⁴¹ The princes of Balahovit were possibly descended from the chiefs of a tribe called Bala mentioned in Assyrian records in this part of Armenia,⁴² and the princes of Hashteanak in the Arsacid/Arshakuni period were always younger brothers of the heir to the Armenian throne.

Cities were not numerous in ancient and early medieval Armenia. Most of the urban centers were uncomparable with those in the Roman and Persian empires, but Sophene had an important city, Arshamashat,⁴³ known to the Greeks as Arsamosata.⁴⁴ Founded by King Arsham at a site on the Aratsani River (now inundated by the great lake created by the construction of a modern dam), this city apparently did not remain the capital of Sophene for very long.⁴⁵ For some reason, perhaps religious, the capital moved to the fortress-shrine of Anggh, which the Armenians also called Arkatiakert⁴⁶ and the Greeks and Romans, Karkathiokerta,⁴⁷ Artagigarta,⁴⁸ and perhaps Epiphaneia.⁴⁹ Here, at Arkatiakert, was located the temple of the Anggh or Tork, god of the underworld in Armenian paganism. He was the patron deity of the Sophenean royal family, and from his cult the site took its common name, Anggh; later Armenians renamed it Agn.⁵⁰

Other towns in Sophene included Khosomakhon, Palu, and Amida, now Diarbekir, which was fortified by the Romans in the fourth century and only then became a large city.⁵¹ There was also Martyro-

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, p. 112.

⁴⁴ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.19.

⁴⁵ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 281.

⁴⁶ Eremyan, *Hayastane*, p. 35, under "Anggh." The form Arkatiakert has been reconstructed by working backwards from the Greek Karkathiokerta and Latin Artagigarta.

⁴⁷ Strabo, *Geography*, Loeb Classical Library Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), XI.14.2.

⁴⁸ Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.22.

⁴⁹ S.T. Eremyan, *Haykakan petutyune Tigran Metsi zhamanakashrjanum* [The Armenian Empire in the Time of Tigranes the Great] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1979), wall map.

⁵⁰ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 167-68.

⁵¹ Amida was fortified by Emperor Constantius II in 349. Prior to that it was an unimportant place and was unknown to Ptolemy in the second century A.D. It is cited in the third-century *Tabula Peutingeria*, repr. in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 134, as the

polis,⁵² a great Christian center that arose about the same time on the site of the Armenian town of Npret or Nprkert,⁵³ called Mayafarkin by the Arabs, and Farkin by the Ottomans, now Silvan.⁵⁴ The kingdom of Sophene also had several fortresses: Horeberd, probably the later Armenian Kharberd or Kharpert,⁵⁵ Tmnis (Greek: Tomisa),⁵⁶ which became an important Roman military base guarding the crossing of the Euphrates River, Dascusa, yet a second Roman base on what one would expect to be the Armenian side of the Euphrates,⁵⁷ Handzit,⁵⁸ and Bnabegh (Greek: Benabila),⁵⁹ which was a royal castle where the Armenian kings stored a portion of their treasure.⁶⁰

There were, of course, many villages in Sophene, some of them of historical interest. Erand (Greek: Rhandeia), for example, was the site of the signing of a major treaty between Rome and Persia in 63 A.D.;⁶¹ Kho[l]kh (Greek: Kolkhis) stood on one of the main Roman

starting point for a route to Tigranakert (incidentally proving that Amida/Diarrbekir cannot be the site of Tigranakert).

⁵² See note 11 above.

⁵³ Ananias, *Geography*, p. 161n48. Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 11, cites the Syriac form, Mefrkt, and another later Armenian form, Muharkin.

⁵⁴ Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, p. 287.

⁵⁵ See notes 19-20 above. In citing Kharpert as a fortress, as its name implies, it should be mentioned that the name does not mean "Rock Castle" as is often seen in popular writings. "Rock" in Armenian is *kar*, whereas the name of this castle in modern Armenian uses the form *Khar*. The form *Khar-pert* or *Khar-berd* most likely derives from Hore, the name of the ancient Khurrians or Hurrians, who once inhabited the Armenian Plateau and probably gave their name to the district of Khordzean. They were succeeded in Armenia by the Urartians, who spoke a Khurrian/Hurrian language.

⁵⁶ Tmnis lay on the eastern (Armenian) bank of the Euphrates River but appears to have been held by Roman forces. Originally controlled by Cappadocia, Tmnis was sold to Sophene in the second century B.C. See David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), vol. 1, p. 370; Eremyan, *Hayastane*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ The exact location of Dascusa is uncertain, but see David French, "New Research on the Euphrates Frontier," in Stephen Mitchell, ed., *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (Ankara: British Institute of Archaeology, 1983), pp. 71-101, Map 7.1, p. 99.

⁵⁸ The Anzita or Anzeta of Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.19.

⁵⁹ Bnabegh is probably the Babila of Ptolemy, *Geography*, V.13.17.

⁶⁰ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 168.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

roads to Mesopotamia;⁶² Dadem (Tadem; Greek: Dadima) became a Byzantine provincial capital.⁶³ Sophene passed back and forth between Roman and Persian rule and at times was revived as an independent state. In 298, however, after a series of long wars, the Romans crushed the Persians in Armenia and the following year forced them to sign the Treaty of Nisibis⁶⁴ by which Persia surrendered to Rome several Armenian principalities, including Tsopk, Greater Tsopk, and Angeghtun-Handzit.⁶⁵ Some time later, two other districts were added to these three,⁶⁶ and since we know the Romans held Balahovit and Hashteank soon after, it would appear that these were the two that were acquired in about 377-78.⁶⁷ As Cyril Toumanoff has shown, these statelets enjoyed the status of *civitates foederatae*, "autonomous polities which were bound to the Empire, not as a consequence of a conquest, but in virtue of an agreement or treaty, and thus owed their sovereign rights to no concession on the part of the protecting power."⁶⁸

Now a curiosity of all this is that although these principalities were ceded to Rome, Armenian sources show that as long as the Armenian Arshakuni kingdom lasted—that is to say until 428 A.D.—all five of them played a fully participatory role in the life of that kingdom.⁶⁹ This raises the question then as to exactly what was meant when the Treaty of Nisibis granted these territories to Rome in 299. The Romans did not remove the Armenian princes, they appointed no Roman governors over them, they quartered no Roman troops in their territories, and they levied no taxes. Surely this is one of the lightest forms of foreign occupation on record. What is probably most likely, as Toumanoff has suggested, was that the close ties that linked Armenia to Rome between 299 and 387 made it possible for

⁶² *Tabula Peutingeriana*, p. cvii.

⁶³ J.D. Howard-Johnston, "Byzantine Anzitene," in Mitchell, *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia*, p. 250.

⁶⁴ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, pp. 170-71, 175-76.

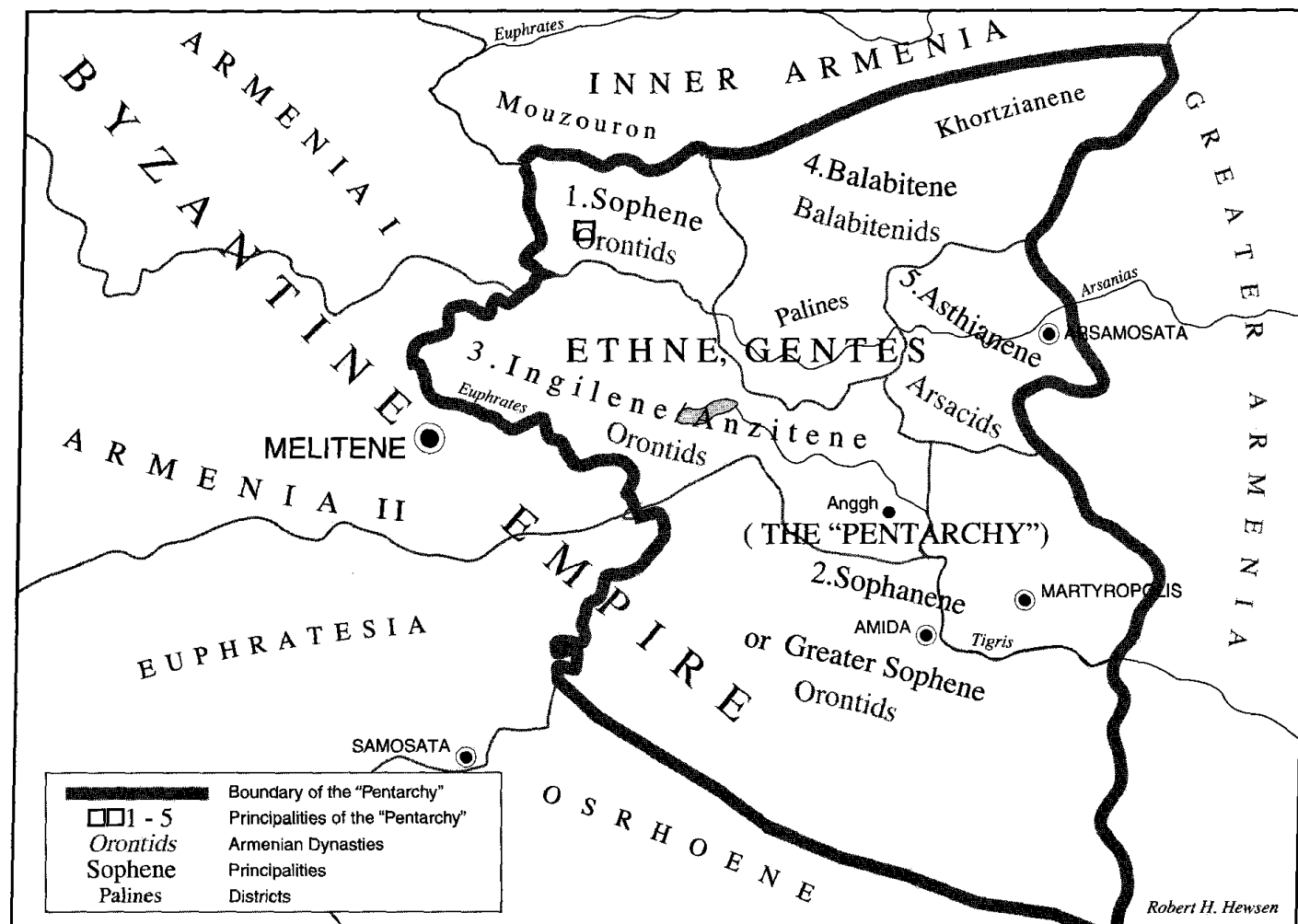
⁶⁵ Peter the Patrician, in Müller, *Fragmenta*, pp. 181-91.

⁶⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum gestarum libri XXXI*, Loeb Classical Library Edition, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982-1987), vol. 3, xxx.2.4.5.

⁶⁷ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 133.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.



The Pentarchy of Sophene

the princes of Sophene to deal freely with the neighboring Armenian kingdom since they and the kings and princes of Greater Armenia were all vassals of Rome at one and the same time.⁷⁰

Not the least curious aspect of these five Armenian principalities is the terms by which they were called. Today, they are referred to as the Pentarchy—a quintet of principalities governed under native rulers. In Greek, however, they were called *ethne* and in Latin *gentes*—both of which mean “peoples.” Why would the Romans refer to these territories as “peoples.” One tentative answer may be suggested: The Armenian term for a noble family in its capacity as a long-lived historical clan was *azg*, a word that in Classical Armenian can mean nation, tribe, clan, and—precisely—people.⁷¹ Yet another way to refer to these principalities in Greek was *satrapai* or in Latin *satrapiae* (satrapies),⁷² a curious term, for it is a Persian administrative title and suggests that the princes were thought of as hereditary governors of their principalities on the Persian model as opposed to appointed governors of the Roman kind. In any case, this term so used has had a baleful effect on later classical writers who tend to use the term “satrap” for any Armenian prince, an incorrect usage that ignores their hereditary and sovereign status.⁷³

Another curiosity in regard to these five principalities is the enormous regard that was extended to their rulers by the Roman government. These principalities were small and weak to the point of being powerless, yet their rulers were treated as minor kings and allowed by Rome to carry regalia and wear boots that were hitherto accorded only to royalty.⁷⁴ Procopius, official historian of Emperor Justinian, has given a description of these accouterments:

There is a cloak made of wool, not such as is produced by sheep, but

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 171.

⁷¹ The *Nor bargirk haykazian lezvi* [New Dictionary of the Classical Armenian Language], 2 vols. (Venice: Mekhitarist Press, 1822; repr., Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1979-1981), vol. 1, p. 6, under the entry *azg* has as Greek translations *genos*, *genea*, and *ethnos*, and as Latin renderings *genus*, *generatio*, and *gens*.

⁷² Latin: *satrapae*; see *Codex Theodosianus, Liber XII Titulus XIII De auro coronario*, in Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 2. Greek: *satrapai*; see Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.1.7.

⁷³ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 107n165.

⁷⁴ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.1.18-23.

gathered from the sea. *Pinnos* the creature is called on which this wool grows. And the part where the purple should have been, that is, where the insertion of purple cloth is usually made, is overlaid with gold. The cloak was fastened by a golden brooch in the middle of which was a precious stone from which hung three sapphires by loose golden chains. There was a tunic of silk adorned in every part with decorations of gold which they are wont to call *plumia*. The boots were of red colour and reached to the knee, of the sort which only the Roman Emperor and the Persian King are permitted to wear.⁷⁵

Why would the Romans, who had little use for hereditary nobility or status based on royal descent, show such concern for the sensitivities of these five petty Armenian princelings? The answer, I believe, lies in the nature of Armenia, a large country made up of dozens of small principalities. It seems likely that the Romans, by treating the Armenian princes under their sway with such dignity and respect, were hoping to attract other Armenian princes into a pro-Roman stance, perhaps even (as in the cases of the princes of Balahovit and Hashtean) enticing them into voluntary acceptance of Roman rule.

Though the Romans may have treated the five princes of the Pentarchy with the greatest deference, they nevertheless took their own overlordship seriously. In the years 482-84, a former general and close associate of Emperor Zeno, named Illus, rebelled against Zeno and, for whatever reason, the Pentarchs, except for the prince Balahovit, rose up on his side. Illus was defeated, however, his movement put down, and in 488 all of the Pentarchs, disloyal and loyal alike, were made to pay. By a decree of that year, the five princes seem to have been deprived of their right to be succeeded by their eldest sons, at least without Roman approval. No longer *civitates foederatae*, they were reduced to the status of *civitates stipendiariae*, paying taxes like everyone else.⁷⁶

In spite of this setback, the Pentarchy continued until the reforms of Emperor Justinian fifty years later. Obviously, the Pentarchs themselves had lost the confidence of the imperial government, which now moved to eliminate them. In the period 528 to 536, a series of edicts effectively reduced the previously autonomous

⁷⁵ Ibid., III.1.20-23.

⁷⁶ Toumanoff, *Christian Caucasian History*, p. 173.

princes of the Pentarchy to the equivalent of private citizens.⁷⁷ By a decree of 528, the entire military forces of imperial Armenia, including those of the Pentarchy, were placed under the Master of Soldiers (*Magister Militum*) for Armenia, Pontus, and the Gentes, with an imperial military governor sitting at the fortress of Theodosiopolis (Armenian: Karin; present-day Erzurum).⁷⁸ In one fell swoop, the princes thus lost their right to maintain their own military forces, while at the same time they had to accept Roman military garrisons within their own lands. By another decree of March 18, 536, the five lands “formerly under satraps” were now placed under a Roman official sitting at Martyropolis in Greater Tsopk.⁷⁹ Thus, sometime between 528 and 536, it is clear that the Armenian princes had been dispossessed of their local authority.⁸⁰ Finally, by a series of laws dated 535, 536, and 543, the Armenians dwelling in the empire were required to divide their properties equally among their sons and daughters alike, decrees that effectively broke up their land holdings so that the Armenian princes were reduced simply to owners of large estates.⁸¹ Under the new Master of Soldiers, Justinian reorganized the imperial holdings in Armenia into four provinces named, respectively, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Armenia, the last being made up of the territory of the old *ethne/gentes/satrapiae*, which now no longer existed even in name.⁸²

After the reforms of Justinian, a number of new fortresses were built in this part of western Armenia. Everett Wheeler has shown that the western frontier of Armenia fluctuated as much as those on other sides of the country in the Roman period.⁸³ Procopius, the Byzantine historian of Justinian’s reign, attests that the local Armenians living along the frontier between Roman and Persian Armenia crossed the frontier at will on market days and even intermarried as if the frontier did not exist.⁸⁴ Justinian changed all this—or attempted

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 174.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 174-75.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Toumanoff opts for 532 as the most likely year for this to have occurred.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 174.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Everett Wheeler, Duke University, personal communication.

⁸⁴ Procopius, *de aedificiis*, III.3.9-14.

to—by erecting one fortress named Artaleison in Khordzean⁸⁵ in northeastern Sophene, which the Armenians called Astghaber, near the town of Kghi, and a second one to the southeast in Hashtean, called Kitharizon at the Armenian village of Ktrich (Gdrich).⁸⁶

Ecclesiastically, the Church in Sophene was based on a combination of the Armenian and the Roman-Byzantine pattern. In general, each principality had its own bishop as in Greater Armenia, but unlike Armenia, where the bishops resided at the princely courts, each see seems to have been localized at a specific town as elsewhere in the empire. There was a superior bishop or metropolitan of upper "Mesopotamia" (that is, the Pentarchy) having his seat at Amida with suffragan bishops in Handzit (Anzitene), later centered at Dadima; Lesser Sophene, probably centered later at Khosomakhon; Ingilene (Angeghtun), at Ingila (Anggh); Greater Sophene, at an uncertain location; and Martyropolis, in the former district of Npret.⁸⁷ Though at the synod of Constantinople convoked in 536 a bishop of Balbitene is noted, there is no mention of a bishop of Asthianene. Nina Garsoïan takes the mention of a *klima* (district) of Astianike (sic) as evidence for a see of that name, so that the episcopal structure in the Pentarchy may or may not have conformed entirely to the political one.⁸⁸ Since the Armenian Church was not officially separated from that of the empire until the late sixth or possibly the early seventh century, these sees were distinct from those of Greater Armenia only in being subject to the metropolitan of Amida and through him to the Patriarch of Constantinople rather than to the Armenian Catholicos at Dvin.⁸⁹

But what happened to the five princely houses? We can only guess. Under the new dispensation, the princes kept their lands but

⁸⁵ Ibid., III.3.14.

⁸⁶ Ibid., III.3.7-8.

⁸⁷ Adontz, *Armenia*, p. 284. See also Nina G. Garsoïan, "Armenia Megale kai Eparkhia Mesopotamias," in *Eupsychia Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, Série Byzantina Sorbonensia 16 (Paris: Sorbonne, 1998), pp. 240-64.

⁸⁸ Nina Garsoïan, "Some Preliminary Precisions on the Separation of the Armenian and Imperial Churches. I: The Presence of 'Armenian' Bishops at the First Five Oecumenical Councils," in *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey on Her 80th Birthday* (Camberley, England: Porphyrogenitus, 1988), p. 273n97.

⁸⁹ Armenian historians tend to ignore the Armenian sees in the Byzantine Empire once the Armenian Church had broken with the Imperial Church, whose patriarch at Constantinople continued to consecrate the Armenian bishops within the empire.

had to divide them equally among their children. The next generation thus inherited not principalities, but simply large estates, the following generation would have inherited smaller estates, and the next still smaller ones until the once great Armenian princely dynasts would have been reduced to little more than farmers. Before that happened, however, it is likely that the descendants of the five Pentarchs migrated into the empire itself, swelling the ranks of the many Armenian nobles entering the Byzantine service.

The destruction of the Pentarchy meant the end of Armenian rule in this part of Armenia. Lost to control of the Armenian kingdom in 299, lost to local Armenian control by 536, this crucial Armenian region then passed from one dominating power to another, which included the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Seljuk Turks, the Mongols, and finally the Ottomans. In 1920, when President Woodrow Wilson drew up his famous western boundary of the projected state of Armenia, the entire territory of Tsopk, including the town of Kharpert and its Golden Plain, was left beyond the border.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Apart from the sources cited above, the following works contain additional material on Tsopk and its component districts: Heinrich Hübschmann, *Die altarmenischen Ortsnamen* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1904; repr. Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1969); Arshak Alpoyachian, *Patmakan Hayastani sahmannere* [The Boundaries of Historical Armenia] (Cairo: Nor Astgh, 1950); Tadevos K. Hakobyan, *Hayastani patmakan ashkharhagrutyun: Urvagtser* [Historical Geography of Armenia: Outlines], 2d ed. (Erevan: Mitk, 1968); Robert H. Hewsen, "Introduction to Armenian Historical Geography IV: The *Vitaxates* of Arsacid Armenia: A Reexamination of the Territorial Aspects of the Institution," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 21 (1988-89): 271-319; and relevant articles in the *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], 12 vols. (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1974-1986).